

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MANAGU 00836 222206Z

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2373

S E C R E T MANAGUA 0836

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, NU

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED CATHOLIC BISHOPS HUMAN RIGHTS MESSAGE
WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA

SUMMARY: DURING FEBURARY 18 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED THE ADMINISTRATION'S DEEP CONCERN OVER THE CHARGES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS MADE IN THE PASTORAL LETTER OF THE NICARAGUAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS. SOMOZA SAID HE WAS PUZZLED AT TIMING OF BISHOPS' LETTER SINCE LARGE-SCALE DETENTIONS HAD BEEN HALTED IN RECENT MONTHS. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT BISHOPS' LETTER CONTAINED INACCURACIES WHICH TENDED TO DISCREDIT IT. END SUMMARY.

1. AT FEBRUARY 18 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA, WE RAISED THE QUESTION OF THE GON'S HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE THAT WAS CRITICIZED IN THE RECENTLY RELEASED CATHOLIC BISHOPS' PASTORAL LETTER. THE PRESIDENT STATED THAT HE WAS PUZZLED BY THE TIMING OF THE RELEASE OF THE BISHOPS' LETTER. HE SAID THAT LARGE-SCALE DETENTIONS AND ARRESTS HAD OCCURRED LAST SUMMER AND THAT THIS PHASE OF THE COUNTER-GUERRILLA OPERATIONS HAD ENDED. HE ASSERTED THAT THE BISHOPS' CLAIM THAT LAND WAS ACCUMULATING IN A FEW HANDS WAS PATENTLY FALSE AND ONLY SERVED TO DISCREDIT THE BISHOPS. SOMOZA SAID THAT THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE KNEW, PARTICULARLY THE TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND LAND OWNERS IN THE COUNTRY, THAT THIS ACCUSATION WAS WITHOUT MERIT. HE ADDED THAT IT WAS HIS OPINION THAT THE BISHOPS HAD ACTED OUT OF FEAR OF THE FSLN GUERRILLAS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 MANAGU 00836 222206Z

2. WE EXPRESSED SUPRISE AT THE PRESIDENT'S VIEWS ON THIS MATTER. IN OUR TALKS WITH SOME OF THE NICARAGUAN BISHOPS, SUCH AS THE ARCH-BISHOP OF NICARAGUA AND BISHOP OF MATAGALPA, IT HAD NEVER OCCURRED TO US THAT THEY WERE ACTING OUT OF FEAR. IT WAS OUR DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THEY FELT IT WAS THEIR MORAL OBLIGATION AS CHRISTIANS TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE,

PARTICULARLY WHEN THEIR PARISHIONERS WERE AFFECTED. WE TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT THE BISHOPS' LETTER TENDED TO CONFIRM OTHER EMBASSY THAT OTHER EMBASSY INFORMATION THAT THE NATIONAL GUARD CONTINUED TO ABUSE CAMPESINOS IN ZELAYA AND OTHER PROVINCES, ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY ON A REDUCED SCALE COMPARED TO LAST SUMMER. WE EXPLAINED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT THE GON'S FAILURE TO BRING AN END ARBITRARY ACTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD WAS THE CAUSE OF DEEP AND CONTINUING CONCERN TO MY GOVERNMENT, AND TO ME PERSONALLY. WE REMINDED HIM THAT PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE HAD EXPRESSED THEMSELVES CLEARLY AND FORCEFULLY ON THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. WHILE IT WAS THE EMBASSY'S IMPRESSION THAT ALLEGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS HAD DECLINED IN RECENT MONTHS, IT WAS DISTURBING TO US, AND A MATTER OF GRAVE CONCERN, THAT WE CONTINUED TO RECEIVE CHARGES OF ABUSES.

3. COMMENT: SOMOZA DID NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WAS PARTICULAR-

LY UPSET BY THE CONTENTS OF THE BISHOPS' LETTER OR THAT HE HAD CONSIDERED ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT ON AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION. THIS ATTITUDE MAY FLOW FROM HIS BELIEF THAT HIS GOVERNMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE IS BETTER THAN MOST IN THE REGION, AND FROM RECENT STEPS HE HAS TAKEN TO REDUCE HIS VULNERABILITY TO U.S. PRESSURE. FOR EXAMPLE, HE MOVED DECISIVELY IN THE PAST SIX WEEKS TO DIVERSIFY NICARAGUA'S SOURCES OF SUPPLY OF CREDIT AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT, USING SPAIN TO SHOW WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE. FURTHERMORE, SOMOZA'S COMMITMENT TO ENDING COMPLETELY WHAT THE BISHOPS CALLED QUOTE A STATE OF TERROR UNQUOTE IN THE NORTH IS QUESTIONABLE. THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF A SERIOUS GON EFFORT TO PUNISH MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF TERROR TACTICS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 MANAGU 00836 222206Z

IN THE REMOTE NORTHERN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, WHERE ANTI-SOMOZA AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT FEELING IS STRONG, IS TRADITIONAL GON TECHNIQUE FOR MAINTAINING CONTROL OF RURAL POPULATION.
THEBERGE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 22-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Subject: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED CATHOLIC BISHOPS HUMAN RIGHTS MESSAGE WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA SUMMARY: DURING FEBURARY 18 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT
TAGS: SHUM, NU, (SOMOZA DEBAYLE, ANASTASIO)
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